

THE  
HISTORY  
ATLAS OF  
AFRICA

Samuel Kasule

MACMILLAN • USA

## MACMILLAN

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## FOREWORD

The shifting patterns of global politics since the collapse of Soviet influence and the liberation of South Africa have radically repositioned the African continent in contemporary world history. *The History Atlas of Africa* offers a timely background study of this widely neglected subject, presenting African history in a way that reflects Africans' own views.

The atlas explores Africa's human history from the evolution of the first hominids, through the pre-historical ages, the ancient empires, the colonial period, and post-independence, to the contemporary era. Recent archaeological discoveries have shown that the history of "the black people" stretches far back into the remote African past, encompassing the development of agriculture and the Iron Age. More recently, the continent has witnessed migrations, conquests, and occupations by Europeans and Arabs, resulting in the rich mixture of contrasting economic, social, artistic, and religious beliefs and practices that it boasts today. Africa to the north of the Sahara is here contrasted with Africa to the south, the Egyptian civilization with those of Benin and Zimbabwe.

The Roman and Byzantine conquests of North Africa were restricted to the coastal strip between Egypt and Mauretania (Morocco), while the spread of Islam from the Middle East, following the decline of the Byzantines, led to the development of great sub-Saharan trading cities. Long before the arrival of the European colonizers, Arabic scholars, geographers and merchants, such as al Bakri, al Fazari, and Ibn Battuta recorded the wealth and splendor of these cities. This atlas includes studies of these often overlooked pre-European cultures.

The spread of Islam and Arabic divided the continent north and south of the Sahara, and these north-south differences were accentuated by the arrival of European colonizers, the transatlantic slave trade, the nineteenth-century spread of Christianity, and the new directions of trade and politics. African and Swahili civilizations were destroyed, while the American and Caribbean connections forged by the slave trade became the cornerstone of the continent's new historical orientation. African religious, agricultural, and artistic traditions have formed the heritage now enjoyed by the descendants of those transported slaves. The atlas includes studies of the African diaspora throughout the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

Contemporary political conflicts are rooted in Africa's past. The effects of European colonial rule, and of the continent's sometimes arbitrary partition between 1880 and 1914, are here examined. Because the new boundaries often disregarded the politics of the pre-colonial "states," the consequences of partition have continued to haunt post-independence Africa in the form of secessionist conflicts such as those in Uganda, Rwanda, Congo, and Nigeria. In this atlas, the roots of such conflicts in the colonial history of subjugation, collaboration, and resistance are explored.

Post-independence Africa has witnessed the rise and fall of several despots, as well as a range of experiments in multi-party democracy and one-party systems rooted in traditional African political structures. With the disintegration of the Eastern bloc and the multinational visit to Africa in March 1998 by U.S. president Bill Clinton, the continent is assuming a new globally strategic role (one that this book, I hope, will prove an aid to understanding).

Dr. Samuel Kasule



# CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5		
PART I	Early Humans	10	
	The Origins of Humankind	14	
	Human Diversity	16	
	Development of Agriculture	18	
	The Iron Age	20	
	African Languages	22	
PART II	Kingdoms and Empires	24	
	Egypt:		
	The Old Kingdom	28	
	The Middle Kingdom	30	
	The New Kingdom	32	
	The Kingdom of Cush	34	
	Roman Africa	36	
	Vandals and Byzantines	38	
	The Empires of Ghana and Mali	40	
	The Berber Brotherhood	42	
	Egypt, 640–1517	44	
	The Songhay Empire	46	
	Benin and Bornu-Kanem	48	
	The Horn of Africa to c. 1500	50	
	Great Zimbabwe	52	
	The Spread of Islam	54	
	Resistance to Islam	58	
	The Peopling of Madagascar	60	
PART III	Europe in Africa	62	
	Portuguese Colonization	66	
	Arrival of European Traders	68	
	Africa, c. 1600	70	
	Black Gold	72	
	West Africa, 1800–1875	74	
	Kingdoms of Central and East Africa	76	
	Africa, c. 1830	78	
	European Explorers, 1840–1889	80	
	Partition, 1880–1885	82	
	Christianity in Africa	86	
	Central Africa and Congo	90	
	Northeast Africa, 1840–1898	94	
	Cape Colony, 1652–1857	96	
	The Zulu Expansion	98	
	Zulu Wars	100	
	The Great Trek, 1836–1846	102	
	The Boer Wars	104	
PART IV	The African Diaspora	106	
	The Americas	110	
	Eurasia	114	
PART V	Imperialism to Independence	118	
	African Resistance	122	
	Africa in World War I	126	
	Africa in World War II	130	
	Liberation Wars	134	
	Independence	138	
	Economy and Trade	140	
	South Africa, Old and New	142	
	CHRONOLOGY	144	
	SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	150	
	INDEX	153	
	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	160	

# INDEX

## A

Aban, or stone palace, 74  
 Abdallabi, Mahdist khalifa, 94  
 Abdallah ibn Yasin, Muslim scholar, 42  
 Abd al-Oirim, 124  
 Abd al-Rahman, ruler of Andalusia, 116  
 Abd al-Salam, Hausa scholar, 78  
 Abd-al-Wahid, empire, 70  
 Abdullab, Arab sheikh, 44  
 Abdullah, Hausa leader, 78  
 Aberdare Mountains, guerilla bases, 134  
 Abyssinia, *see* Ethiopia.  
 Abu Said, Arab merchant, 62  
 Accra, early colonial fort, 66  
     English fort, St. James 64  
 Adamawa, Emirate of, 58, 84, 122  
 Adowa, battle of, 1896, 62, 94  
 African Association, later Royal  
     Geographic Society, 80, 90  
 African-Caribbean culture, 112  
 African National Congress  
     (ANC), 120, 142-3  
 African Native National Congress, 142  
 Agriculture, development of, 18  
 Ahmad al-Mansur, Moroccan leader, 70  
 Ahmed Ben Bella, Algerian Nationalist,  
     134  
 Ahmed bin Ibrahim, Arab ruler, 58  
 Air, kingdom of, 46  
 Akan, goldfields, 40, 46  
 Akhet-Aten, new capital, ancient Egypt,  
     32  
 Akjoujt, early copper-working, 20  
 Al-Bakri, Arabic traveler, 40, 116  
*Albanes*, slave ship, 106  
*Albatross*, *H.M.S.*, British warship, 106  
 Al Fazari, Arabic traveler, 40  
 Algeria,  
     invaded by France, 1830, 78  
     gains independence, 1962, 134  
     Kabyile Berbers, 70  
 al-Ksa Kebir, Morocco, battle of, 70  
 Almeida, Lacerda, Portuguese explorer,  
     80  
 Almohad, Berber Muslim dynasty, 70  
 Almoravid, Berber Muslim dynasty, 42,  
     70  
 Al-Mu'izz, Fatamid caliph, 44  
 al-Muqaddasi, Arab writer, 115  
 al-Murabitun, *see* Almoravid, 42  
 Aloma, Idris, sultan, 46  
 al-Tabari, Arab writer, 108  
 Al-Wahid, 70  
 Aaimoro, Malay-Polynesian people, 60  
 Amars Dunkas, 44

Ambohidratrimo, united within Merina  
     kingdom, 60  
 Ambohimanga, united within Merina  
     kingdom, 60  
 Amenophis III, pharaoh, 32  
 Amenophis IV, pharaoh, 32  
 Amhara, 50  
 Amin, Idi, Ugandan dictator, 140  
 Ammenemes, pharaoh, 30  
 Andalusia, Arab rule, 116  
 Andriamanelo, Madagascan ruler, 60  
 Andrianampoinimerina, king of Merina,  
     60  
 Andriandahifotsy, king of Sakalava, 60  
 Anglo-German Treaty, 1890, 64  
 Animals, domestication of, 18  
 Antaifsay, Malay-Polynesian people, 60  
 Antananarivo, united within Merina  
     kingdom, 60  
 Apartheid, dismantled, 143  
     ideology, 142,  
 Arab, invasion of Egypt, 44  
 Arguin, conquest by Portuguese, 66  
 Ashanti, of Ghana, 64, 68, 82  
     wars, 122  
 Aten, cult of, 32  
 Atlas Mountains, 42, 70  
 Attahiru Ahmadu, sultan, 122  
 Aures, Moorish tribal kingdom, 38  
 Awdaghust, Berber stronghold, 40  
 Axim, Portuguese fort, 66  
 Axum, 50, 86  
 Ay, king of Egypt, 32  
 Ayyubid dynasty, 44  
 Azikiwe, Namdi, 138

## B

Babylonians, Egypt subject to, 24  
 Baden-Powell, Colonel, 105  
 Bagender, state of, 94  
 Baghdad, slave uprising in, 115  
 Bai Bureh, guerilla leader, 124  
 Bailundo of Bakonga, rebel against  
     Portuguese rule, 124  
 Baker, Samuel, explorer, 80, 94  
 Bali, under Ethiopian control, 50  
 Bambuk, goldfield, 40  
 BaMbuti, *see* Pygmies, 12  
 Bantu, 20, 22, 54, 72  
     Education Act, 142  
     kingdoms, 62  
 Banu Hilal, Bedouin tribe, 44  
 Banu Sulayman, Bedouin tribe, 44  
 Baptist, missionaries, 86  
 Baptista, Pedro, 80

Baquates, Moorish tribal kingdom, 38  
 Barotse (Lozi), kingdom of, 99  
 Barth, Heinrich, explorer, 80  
 Basra, slave uprising, 115  
 Basuto Sotho, kingdom of, 99  
 Battutta, Ibn, Arab traveler, 41, 56  
 Bauchi, Emirate of, 58  
 Bedouin, 44,  
     invasion of the Maghrib, 70,  
     settlement of northwest Africa, 54,  
     Sanusi, 124  
 Belgian African Association, 88  
 Belgian government, 92  
 Belisarius, Byzantine general, 38  
 Bemba, tribe, 72  
 Benin, city-state, 26, 48, 116  
     Christianity in, 63,  
     slaves exported from, 72,  
 Berbers, *see also* Peoples  
     Atlas Mountain, 70  
     Bilad e Makhzen, 42  
     Kabyile Mountain, 70  
     Sanhaja, 42  
 Berlin Conference, 1884, 63, 84  
 Betsimisaraka, tribe 60  
 Bevan, Captain Henry, 115  
 Bight of Benin, 66  
 Bigo Bya Mugenyi, 51  
 Bilad e Makhzen (Land of Order), 42  
 Bilal es Siba (Land of Disobedience), 42  
 Bisa, tribe, 72  
 Black Death, decline of the Mamelukes,  
     44  
 Blood River, battle of, 102  
 Boers (Dutch farmers), 62, 69, 104  
     arrival of, 96,  
     of the Transvaal, 100,  
 Boina, kingdom of, 60  
 Bonsu, Osei, 74  
 Border Cave, ancient human site, 14  
 Bornu-Kanem, 25, 46, 48, 49, 56  
 Bornu, state, 78, 124  
 Bowork ibn Chamriyar, 60  
 Brava, Portuguese attack and loot, 67  
 British Church Missionary Society, 64  
 British East Africa Company, 69  
 British empire,  
     abolition of slavery, 73  
     Act of 1833, 111  
     Egypt, 126  
     Sokoto, 122  
     Somalia, 122  
     South Africa, 65, 97, 104  
     Sudan, 124, 125  
 British South Africa Company, 69  
 Bronze production, 20



- Bruce, James, explorer, 80  
 Buganda, kingdom of, 56, 64, 69, 77  
   conflict in, 62  
 Bunyoro, attempted Egyptian control, 62  
 Burton, Richard, explorer, 80  
 Burundi, state, 77, 92, 120  
 Busaidi-Mazrui, war, 78  
 Bushiri bin Salim, Swahili resistance leader, 124  
 Bushman, *see also* Khoisan, 96  
 Butler, R., British general, 104  
 Bwana Heri, Swahili resistance leader, 124
- C**
- Cabaon, Moorish tribal kingdom, 38  
 Cabral, Pedralves, Portuguese sailor, 60  
 Caesarea, 39  
 Cairo, becomes Fatimid capital, 44  
 Cameroon, 82, 122  
 Cao, Diago, explorer, 66  
 Cape Colony, 65, 96, 97, 104, 105  
 Cape Colored, people, 97  
 Cape of Good Hope, 96  
 Caprivi Strip, 126  
 Capsus, Moorish tribal kingdom, 38  
 Cartenna, Byzantine possession, 39  
 Carthage, 20, 24, 36, 38, 42  
 Caton-Thompson, Gertrude, 52  
 Cattle, domestication of, 18  
 Cethswayo, Zulu king, 100  
 Ceuta, 38, 66, 68  
 Changamira, ruler of Rowzi kingdom, 52, 76  
 Chengshi, Duan, 106  
 Chezwi dynasty, of Kitara, 26, 51  
 Chitimukulu, Bemba king, 76  
 Christianity, spread of, 86, 88  
 Clapperton, explorer, 80  
 Congo, *see also* Zaire, 16, 90, 116  
 Congo Basin, 84  
 Congo "Free State," 90  
 Congolese National Movement (MNC), 138  
 Copper-working, 20  
 Coptic Church, Christian, 25, 86  
 Crowther, Reverend Samuel, 88  
   Yoruba Christian convert, 88  
 Cush, *see also* Nubia, 10, 30, 34  
 Cushite kingdom, 34
- D**
- Dabulamzi ka Mpaande, Zulu prince, 101  
 Dadog, people, 51  
 da Gama, Vasco, explorer 66  
 Dahomey, 84  
 dan Fodio, Usman, revolutionary leader 74  
 Dar es Salaam, British attack, 126  
 Darfur, 49, 63, 73  
 Dawaro, Muslim town under Ethiopian control, 50  
 Daybuli, dynasty, 54  
 de Brazza, Pierre Savorgnan, explorer, 80, 90  
 de Gaulle, Charles, 134  
 Deir el Bahari, funerary temple, 30  
 Denham, explorer, 80  
 Dhlo-dhlo, ruins of, 76  
 Dias, Diniz, explorer and conqueror, 66  
 Dingane, Zulu king, 102  
 Dingisiwayo, Zulu chief, 98  
 Dinka, tribe, 63, 73, 94  
 Djeddar, Moorish tribal kingdom, 38  
 Domestic animals, 18  
 Dongola, 94  
 Drakensberg Mountains, 78  
 Dube, J. L., 131  
 DuBois, W. E. B., 138  
 Dutch East India Company, 69, 96  
 Dutch Republic of Graaf Reinet, 97  
 d'Zazmbja, Diogo, 66
- E**
- Early humans, 10, 11, 12, 14  
   Australopithecines, 11, 14  
   Australopithecus aferensis, 11  
   A. africanus, 10, 11  
   A. ramidus, 11  
   A. robustus, 10  
   Homo erectus, 11, 14  
   H. habilis, 10, 11, 14  
   H. sapiens sapiens, 11  
   Neanderthal, 16  
   Rhodesian, 16  
 East African Community (EAC), 140  
   Roman province, 36  
 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 140  
 Egypt, 46, 86, 94, 126  
   ancient, 24, 25, 28, 30, 32, 34  
   El Amarna, capital, New Kingdom, 32, 44  
   Mameluke, rulers of, 26, 44  
   Middle Kingdom, 30  
   Old Kingdom, 28  
 Ekpe, tribe, 72  
 Elmina, castle, 66, 68, 72

Enda Mika'el Axum, palace, 20  
 Entebbe, missionary post, 88  
 Ethiopia, 14, 18, 50, 62, 82, 86, 94, 132  
 Ewedo, king of Benin, 48

## F

Fatimid, dynasty, 44  
 Fayum Depression, Egypt, 30  
 Felasha, under Ethiopian control, 50  
 Fernandes, Antonio, explorer, 66  
 Fezzan, 46, 78  
 Fgba, Yoruba state, 63  
 Food plants, domestication of, 18  
 Fort Jesus, 67, 69  
 Free French, Senagalese soldiers, 130  
 French Catholic White Fathers, 88  
 French East India Company, 72  
 Frere, Sir Bartle, British governor of South Africa, 101  
 Front de Libération National (FLN), 133  
 Fronte de Libertação de Mozambique (FRELIMO), 120, 136  
 Fulani jihads, 58  
 Funj Sultanate, 44  
 Futa Jalon, state, 74  
 Futa Toro, state, 74

## G

Gaiseric, Vandal king, 38  
 Galla, raids on Ethiopia, 62  
 Gambia, 138  
 Gambia River, 68  
 Gambles Cave, 10  
 Gao, 40, 46, 70  
 German East Africa Company, 69  
 German Southwest Africa, invaded by allies, 1914, 126  
 German Witu Company, 69  
 Ghana, 82, 122, 138  
   ancient, 40  
   empire of, 25, 42  
 Giriama Wars, 122  
 Gobir, Hausa state, 46, 74  
 Gojjam, under Ethiopian control, 50  
 Gold, goldfields  
   Akan, 40  
   Bambuk, 40  
   Nubia, 32  
   Wangara, 40  
 Gold Coast,  
   British possession, 78  
   Independent, *see* Ghana, 138  
 Gommès, Fernando, trader, 66

Gondokoro, raided by Egypt, 63, 73  
 Gordon, George, British general in Egyptian service, 94  
 Grande Dorsale, Moorish tribal kingdom, 38  
 Great Trek, 98, 102  
 Great Zimbabwe, 20, 52  
 Greenberg, language divisions, 22  
 Griquas, tribe, 97  
 Group Areas Act, South Africa, 142  
 Guinea, 66  
   Gulf of, 66  
 Gundat, battle of 1875, 94  
 Gura, battle of 1876, 94

## H

Hadeja, emirate established, 58  
 Hadya, under Ethiopian control, 50  
 Hafsids, state, 70  
 Hamito-Semitic, people, 12  
 Harkuf, governor, ancient Egypt, 28  
 Hausa, states, 26, 46  
   traders, 54  
 Hausaland, 58  
 Hautes Plateaux, people of, 60  
 Hayford, Casely, 131  
 Hehe, tribe, 122  
 Henry the Navigator, king of Portugal, 66  
 High Veld, invaded by Zulus, 78  
 Hijra (withdrawal from pagan territory to Islamic territory), 122  
 Hodna, Moorish tribal kingdom, 38  
 Homelands, South Africa, 136  
 Horemheb, pharaoh, 32  
 Horton, J. Africanus, 131  
 Hottentot, Khoisan ethnic group, 96  
 Hottentot Code of 1809, legitimizes slavery, 102  
 Houphouët-Boigny, 138  
 Human Ethnic Tree, 14  
 Human populations  
   classification of, 12  
   origins, fossil remains of, 14  
 Huru, tribe, 92  
 Hyksos, Asian invaders, 24

## I

Ibadan, state, 63, 75  
 Ibo, tribe, 72  
 Idia, Benin mystic, 48  
 Idris al-Mahdi al-Sanusi, king of Libya, 138  
 Idris Alooma, ruler of Bornu-Kanem, 49

Igbo, Yoruba state, 75  
 Ijaye, Yoruba state, 63, 75  
 Immorality Act, South Africa, 142  
 Impis (Zulu regiment), 98  
 Iron Age, 12, 18, 20, 40  
 Isandlwana, battle of, 1879, 100  
 Islam,  
   Muhammed, the Prophet, 25  
   jihads, West African, 74  
   resistance to, 58  
   spread of, 25, 54, 56, 70  
 Italy, war with Sanusi Bedouins, 124, 126  
   Invasion of Ethiopia, 1935, 131  
   surrender to Allied forces, 1941, 131  
 Ituri forest, 20  
 Ivory Coast, occupied by French, 84

## J

Jackson, Frederick, British representative, Berlin Conference, 63  
 Jamaica, slave revolt, 108  
 Jameson's raid, 1895, 104  
 Jenne, 40  
 Jihad (holy war), 58  
   West African, 74  
 John II, king of Portugal, 66  
 Jose, Anastasio, explorer, 80  
 Joux, fortress of, France, 109  
 Justinian, Byzantine emperor, 38

## K

Kabaka (king), Mutesa I, 64, 88  
 Kabarega, king of Bunyoro, 62, 77  
 Kabyie Mountain Berbers, 70  
 Kaffir wars, 96  
 Kalahari Desert, 14, 16, 22  
 Kalenjin, tribe, 50, 51  
 Kanem, 46, 49  
 Kaniok, kingdom of, 76  
 Kano, Hausa state, 46  
 Kalundwe, kingdom of, 76  
 Karamajong, tribe, 51  
 Karamanli, Yusuf, pasha of Tripoli, 78  
 Karnak, temple of, 34  
 Kashata, king of Nubia, 24, 34  
 Kassa, chief of Qwara, 62, 94  
 Katagum, emirate established, 58  
 Katanga, uprising, 120  
 Katsina, Hausa state, 46  
 Kawa, temple of, 34  
 Kazembe, kingdom of, 76  
 Kenya  
   Gambles cave, 10  
   Giriama wars, 122

liberation war, 134  
 Kenya African Union, 134  
 Kenyatta, Jomo, 118, 134, 138  
 Khamsi, ruins of, 76  
 Khartoum, 94, 116  
 Khoisan, Hottentot and Bushmen, ethnic groups, 97  
 Kikonja, kingdom of, 76  
 Kikuyu, tribe, 118  
 Kilolo Sotho, tribe, 99  
 Kilwa, 26, 52, 54, 66, 73  
 Kilwa-Kisangani, 54  
 Kimathi, Dedani, Mau-Mau leader, 134  
 Kimberley, 104  
 King's Africa Rifles, British colonial regiment, 126, 131, 132  
 Kisangani (Stanleyville), 90  
 Kooba Fora, ancient human site, 14  
 Koran, codes, 58  
 Kordofan, nomads of, 94  
 Kruger, Paul, president of Transvaal, 104  
 Kuanda, Kenneth, 138  
 Kumasi, 74  
 Kumbi-Saleh, 40  
 Kunlun-bo, boat, 60  
 Kwanmaqwa, mission, 86

## L

Ladysmith, 104  
 Lagos, under rule of Benin, 48  
 Lake Albert, 80  
 Lake Chad, 46, 48, 49, 124  
 Lake Eyasi, 10  
 Lake Mwitanzige (renamed Albert in 1864), 80  
 Lake Nalubaale (renamed Victoria in 1856), 80  
 Lake Tana, Ethiopians control, 50  
 Lake Tanganyika, 62  
 Lake Turkana, 51  
 Lake Victoria, 50, 51, 80  
 Lakhata, battle of, 1900, 124  
 Lamba, tribe, 72  
 Lamu, city-state, 56  
 Lander, explorer, 80  
 Languages  
   Arabic, 22, 70  
   Bambara, 22  
   Bantu, 22  
   Bari, 22  
   Berber, 22, 70  
   Chadic, 22  
   Chari-Nile, 22  
   Coptic, 86  
   Creole, 112



- Cushitic, 22  
 Dadog, 22  
 Darobo, 22  
 Dinka, 22  
 Egyptian, ancient, 22  
 Fula, 22  
 Fulani, 22  
 Gullah, 112  
 Hausa, 22  
 Ibo, 22  
 Itunga, 22  
 Kakwaand, 22  
 Kalenjin, 22  
 Karamajong-Teso, 22  
 Khoisan, 22  
 Kwa family, 22  
 Luganda, 22  
 Lusoga, 22  
 Lwo, 22  
 Maasai, 22  
 Malagasy, 60  
 Mande, 22  
 Melkite Greek, 86  
 Muru-Madi, 22  
 Niger-Congo family, 22  
 Nilotic, 22  
 Nuer, 22  
 Runyankole, 22  
 Semitic, 22  
 Solinke, 22  
 Sotho, 22  
 Southern Nguni, 22  
 Swahili, 22, 26, 54  
 Wolo, 22  
 Xhosa, 22  
 Yoruba, 22  
 Zulu, 22  
 Late Iron Age, 26  
 Late Stone Age, 16, 18, 20  
 League of Nations, 73, 126, 142, 128  
 Leopold II, king of Belgium, 63, 84, 90, 92  
 Lewanika, chief of the Lozi, 77  
 Liberia, 78, 82  
 Livingstone, David, explorer and missionary, 80  
 London Missionary Society, 88  
 L'Organisation Commune Africaine et Mauricienne (OCAM), 140  
 Lozi, kingdom, 76, 77  
 Lualaba, kingdom of, 76  
 Luba, kingdom of, 76  
 Lumumba, Patrice, 138  
 L'Union Douanière et Économique de l'Ouest (UDEAL), 140  
 Luxor, temple, 32  
 Lydenberg, trekker settlement, 102  
**M**  
 Maasai, tribe, 51  
 Machel, Samora, 143  
 Macina, state, 56  
 Madagascar, *see also* Malagasy  
   settlement of, 60  
   independence of, 138  
 Mafeking, siege of, 105  
 Mafia Islands, 56  
 Magdala, fortress, 94  
 Magreb Al Aksa, *see also* Morocco, 26  
 Maghrib, 42, 70  
   agriculture, 36  
 Mahdi, rebellion of, 94  
 Mai Dunama Dibalemi, 46, 49  
 Maji-Maji rebellion, 122, 124  
 Makeba, Miriam, jazz singer, 22  
 Malagasy, *see also* Madagascar  
   language, 60  
 Malawi, 66, 72  
 Malay-Polynesian, settlement of  
   Madagascar, 60  
 Mali, 25  
   empire of, 40, 56  
 Malindi, 26  
   city-state, 56  
 Mameluke, Egyptian warrior and ruling  
   caste, 26  
   decline of, 44  
 Mande, tribe, 54  
 Mandela, Nelson, 120, 142  
 Mandinka, tribe, 40, 68  
 Manicongo, king of Congo, 62  
 Mansa Kankan Musa, king of Mali, 40  
   56  
 Mansa Sulayman, king of Mali, 41  
 Marinid, state, 70  
 Maroantsetra, under control of  
   Merina, 60  
 Maroons, rebellious slaves, 108  
 Mashonaland, occupied by British South  
   Africa Company, 69  
 Masmuda, nomadic Berber tribe, 42  
 Masina, jihad in, 75  
 Masuna, Moorish tribal kingdom, 38  
 Matabele, tribe, 98  
 Matabeleland, occupied by British South  
   Africa Company, 69  
 Matope, king of Karanga, 52  
 Mau-Mau, 118, 122, 134  
 Mauretania Caesariensis, Roman  
   province, 38  
 Mauretania Sitifensis, Roman province,  
   38  
 Mauritius, slaves used on sugar  
   plantations, 72  
 Mecca, birthplace of the Prophet  
   Mohammed, 54  
   pilgrimage to, 40  
 Memphis, 34  
 Menabe, kingdom of, 60  
 Menelik, of Shoa, 62, 94  
 Menes, first king of a United Egypt, 28  
 Mentuhotep I, pharaoh, 30  
 Merina, kingdom of, 60  
 Meroë, kingdom of, 72  
 Metalworking, 20  
 Methodists, Wesleyan, missionaries, 86  
 Meynell, Lt. British officer, 106  
 Mfecane, wars, 78, 98  
 Mhlathuse River, 98  
 Middle Kingdom, ancient Egypt, 30  
 Middle Passage, slave trade, 107  
 Middle Stone Age, 16, 18  
 Milner, Alfred, British High  
   Commissioner to South Africa, 104  
 Mirambo, chief of the Nyamwezi, 116  
 Mogadishu, 26  
 Mohammed bin Sayed,  
   *see also* Tippu Tip, 76, 116  
 Mohammed, Prophet, 25, 54  
 Mombasa, 26, 67, 69  
 Monomotapa, kingdom of, 76  
 Morocco, 26, 42-3  
 Moshoeshe, king of Basuto Sotho, 99  
 Mossi, tribe, 46  
 Mount Kenya, 134  
 Mount Kilimanjaro, 126  
 Movimento Popular de Liberação  
   de Moçambique  
   (MPLA), 120, 136, 143  
 Mozambique Coast, 56  
 Mswazi, Zulu refugee, 99  
 Mthethwa, tribe, 98  
 Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi, 94, 124  
 Muhammad Ali, Egyptian ruler, 62, 78,  
   94  
 Muhammad al-Kanemi, 74  
 Murzuk, 49  
 Museveni, Yoweri, 140  
 Music, African traditions in New World,  
   112  
 Muslim, influence on Berbers, 42  
 Mutesa I, king of Buganda, 64, 88  
 Mutota, king of Karanga, 52  
 Mwamba, queen of the Lozi, 76  
 Mwanamutapa empire, 26, 52, 66, 68  
 Mwanga, king of Buganda, 88

Mwata Kazembe, 76  
 Mwata Yamvo, 76  
 Mzikazi, 98, 102  
 Mzura, Kalonga, ruler of Malawi, 66

**N**

Nachtigal, Gustav, explorer, 80  
 Nairobi, 119  
 Nalatali, ruins of, 76  
 Namibia, 82, 143  
 Nandi wars, Kenya, 122  
 Napier, Robert, British general, 94  
 Nasser, Gamal Abdel, 138  
 Ndwandwe, tribe, 98  
 New Kingdom, ancient Egypt, 32  
 Nguni, 62, 98  
   invasions of the Zulus, 78  
 Ngwane, tribe, 98  
 Niani, 40  
 Niger Delta, 48, 122  
 Niger River, 25, 40, 80  
 Niger Territories, 88  
 Nigeria, 138  
 Nile Delta, 32  
 Nile River, seasonal flooding, 24  
 Nile Valley, food plants, 18  
 Nkrumah, Kwame, 138  
 North Africa,  
   Byzantine empire, 38  
   Roman empire, 36  
   Vandal invasions of, 36  
 Northern Rhodesia, 138  
 Northern Rhodesian Rifles, regiment,  
   126  
 Nubia, *see also* Cush, 30, 34  
   Kashata, king, 24  
   occupied by Egypt, 24, 32  
   religion, Christianity, 86  
 Nuer, raided by Egypt, 63  
 Numidia, becomes Roman province, 36  
   western, 38  
 Nupe, state, 58  
 Nyamwezi, tribe, 62, 72, 116  
 Nyerere, Julius, 138  
 Nzinga, Mani, king of Congo, 66

**O**

Ohrigstad, trekker settlement, 102  
 Old Kingdom, ancient Egypt, 28  
 Olduvai Gorge, 14, 16  
 Omani, Busaidi Sultans, 62  
   struggle for east African trade, 62  
 Omdurman, battle of, 1898, 94  
 Omo Valley, ancient human site, 14

Orange Free State, 65, 102, 104  
 Orange River, 97, 102  
 Organization of African Unity (OAU),  
   120, 136  
 Oromo, conquered by Ethiopia, 62, 94  
 Ottoman  
   empire, 70, 78, 126, 128  
   Turks, 44, 49  
 Ovimbundu, tribe, 124  
 Oyo, state, 58

**P**

Padmore, George, 138  
 Pan-African Conference, 118, 138  
 Park, Mungo, explorer, 80  
 Pate, city-state, 56  
 Peoples  
   Almohads, 70  
   Al-Wahids, 70  
   Ashanti, 68, 82  
   Assyrians, 34  
   BaMbuti, *see also* Pygmies, 12, 16,  
     20, 22  
   Bantu, 20, 22, 54, 72  
   Bedouin, 44, 70  
   Berbers, 12, 16, 34, 42, 44, 70  
   Boers, 62, 69  
   Bushman, *see* Khoisan 12, 16, 20  
   Cushites, 12, 16  
   Dinka, 94  
   Giriama, 122  
   Haemoid-Semites, 12, 16  
   Hottentots, 12, 16, 96  
   Kanuri, 48  
   Khoisan, *see* Bushman, 12, 16, 20,  
     22, 97  
   Mande, 22  
   Mijikenda, 122  
   Moors, 38  
   Negroes, 12, 16  
   Nilo-Saharan, 12, 16  
   Portuguese, 48  
   Pygmies, *see also* BaMbuti, 12, 16,  
     20, 22  
   San, 12, 22  
   Sangoan, 10  
   Shilluk, 94  
   Vandals, 38  
   Yao, 122  
   Zande, 20  
   Zulus, 62  
 Periplus, Greek merchant, 72  
 Peters, Karl, 63, 124  
 Phoenician, trade from Carthage, 42  
   settlement of Carthage, 24

Pianky (Peye or Piy), Cushite pharaoh,  
   34  
 Plaatje, Sol, 131  
 Plantations, foreign owned, 118  
 Pombeiros, slaves in Portuguese service,  
   80  
 Portuguese, 78, 84, 86, 88  
   colonization, 66  
   expeditions, 80  
   struggle for trade on east coast, 62  
 Punic War, 36

**Q**

Quelimane, 66

**R**

Rabih ibn Fadl Allah, struggle against  
   the French, 124  
 Radama I, king of Merina, 60  
 Ralambo, founder of Merina dynasty, 60  
 Rameses I, king, 32  
 Rameses II, king, 32  
 Ranavalona I, queen of Merina, 60  
 Randall-MacIver, David, 52  
 Republic of Biafra, 120  
 Republic of Natalia, 102  
 Republic of Natal, 65  
 Retief, Piet, Boer leader, 102  
 Rhodes, Cecil, diamond merchant, 69  
 Rhodesia, 134  
   declares UDI (Unilateral Declaration  
   of Independence), 136  
 River Ruw, German resistance, WWI,  
   126  
 Roberts, Lord, British Commander,  
   Boer War, 104  
 Rock paintings, Kondoa district,  
   Tanzania, 18  
 Roman Catholic, missionaries, 88  
 Roman Empire  
   provinces, 25  
   settlement in North Africa, 25, 36-37  
 Rowzi, kingdom, 52, 76  
 Royal Geographical Society  
   (formerly African Association), 80  
 Rusginiac, Byzantine possession, 39  
 Rwanda, 77, 92  
   ethnic struggle in, 120

**S**

Saadid, Moroccan nomadic tribe, 70  
 Saadin, tribal leader, 70  
 Sabratha, Roman city, 37



- Sahara Desert, 12, 13, 14, 80  
 cities of, 49  
 trade routes, 25, 42, 44, 46, 49, 54, 66, 70, 75, 116  
 Said Sayyid, 78  
 Sakalava, cattle farmers, 60  
 Saladin (Salah al-Din), 44  
 Saldanha Bay, ancient human site, 16  
 Salisbury, Lord, British leader, 104  
 Samaguru, chief of Sosso, 40  
 Samori Toure, Mandinka emperor, 122, 124  
 Sangoan, ancient people, 10  
 Sanhaja Berbers, 40, 42  
 São Jorge da Mina, *see* Elmina, 66  
 São Tomé, 66  
 Saudi Arabia, 73  
 Sayyed Muhammad Hassan, leader of jihad, 122, 124  
 Schreiner, W. P., prime minister of Cape Colony, 104  
 Semenekh-Ka-Re, ruler, 32  
 Sena, fort, 66  
 Senegal, 40, 84  
 Separate Amenities Act, South Africa, 143  
 Sewafa dynasty, of Bornu-Kanem, 48  
 Shabaka, pharaoh, 34  
 Shabataka, pharaoh, 34  
 Shaka, Zulu chief, 62, 78, 98  
 Shama, fort, 66  
 Shirazi Arabs, settle at Kilwa, 26  
 dynasty, 56  
 Shoa, 50, 94  
 Sidama, conquered by Ethiopia, 62, 94  
 Sierra Leone, colony for freed slaves, 78  
 Sijlmasa, 43  
 Slavery, 72, 73, 78, 106, 107, 108, 111, 112, 116, 118  
 Smuts, Jan, Boer general, 104  
 Sobhuza, chief of Ngwame, 98  
 Sofala, 54  
 Sokoto, empire, 78, 122  
 Solomic kings, of Zagwe kingdom, 50  
 Somalia, 62  
 Songhay, 25, 26, 42, 46, 56, 70  
 Sonni Ali, Songhay ruler, 46  
 Soshangane, Zulu leader, 98  
 Sotho, tribe, 96  
 South African League, 104  
 South Cameroons Company, 69  
 Southern African Development Community (SADC), 140  
 Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), 140  
 Southern Rhodesia, 134, 143  
 South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), 136, 143  
 South West African Union (SWANU), 136  
 Stanley, Henry, explorer, 90  
 Stanleyville (Kisangani), 90  
 St. George, Coptic Church, Ethiopia, 50  
 St. James, of Accra, fort, 64  
 St. Paul de Luanda, 66  
 Speke, John, explorer, 80  
 Stoutpanberg, 102  
 Sudan, 80, 94, 124  
 Sundjata, Malinke leader, 40  
 Swellendam, 97  
 T  
 Table Bay, port, 96  
 Tacfarinas, campaign fought by emperor Tiberius, 36  
 Tafnakht, of Sais, Egyptian leader, 34  
 Taharqa, pharaoh, 34  
 Tamatave, under Merina control, 60  
 Tanganyika, 82, 122, 126, 128, 131, 138  
 Tang, dynasty, 106  
 Tanzania, 10, 138, 140  
 Tashufin, Yusuf ibn, 43  
 Taung, ancient human site, 14  
 Tautimani, pharaoh, 34  
 Tete, fort, 66  
 Tewodros (Theodore), emperor of Ethiopia, 62, 94  
 Thaba 'Nchu, 102  
 Thebes, 30, 32  
 Tiberius, Roman emperor, 36  
 Tigre, 94  
 Tipasa, Byzantine possession, 39  
 Timbuktu, 46  
 Timgad, Roman city, 36  
 Tipasa, Byzantine possession, 39  
 Tippu Tip, *see* Mohammed bin Sayed, 62, 76  
 Tlokwas, tribe, 98  
 Togoland, 82  
 Tondibi, attack on Songhay army, 70  
 Tongwa, ruler of Mwanamutapa, 52  
 Toure, Samori, Mandinka leader, 75  
 Transvaal, 65, 102  
 Tripoli, 46, 78  
 Tripolitania, 124  
 Trista, Nuno, Portuguese explorer, 66  
 Tukolor, empire, 75  
 Tunisia, 70  
 Tunka Manin, ruler of Ghanian empire, 40  
 Turre, Askia Mohammed, ruler of Songhay empire, 46  
 Turre, dynasty, 46  
 Tut-Ankh-Amun, 32  
 Tut-Ankh-Aten, *see* Tut-Ankh-Amun, 32  
 Tutsi, tribe, 92  
 U  
 Ubangi Chari, 90  
 Uganda, 88, 120, 140  
 Uganda Martyrs, 88  
 Uganda Railway, 126  
 Ujiji, 78  
 Ulundi, battle of, 1879, 101  
 United Nations, 136, 143  
 United States, abolishes slavery, 1863, 73  
 Unyamwezi, 78  
 Unyanyembe, 78  
 Upper Guinea, 66  
 Uqba ibn Nafi, establishes Islam in Libya, and Tunisia, 54  
 Usman dan Fodio, leader of jihad, 56  
 V  
 van der Stel, Simon, Boer leader, 96  
 Vegetation, change, 12  
 Vegkop, battle of, 1836, 102  
 Venda, tribe, 102  
 W  
 Wadi-el-Alaki, Nubia, source of gold, 32  
 Wadi Gabgada, Nubia, source of gold, 32  
 Waka, canoe, 60  
 Walata, 40, 46  
 Wangara, goldfield, 40  
 Waqwaq, settlers in Madagascar, 60  
 War of the Guns, 1880, South Africa, 100  
 Wattasid, dynasty, Morocco, 70  
 Wazimba, Bantu ethnic group, 60  
 Wilberforce, William, 111  
 World War I, 126, 128  
 World War II, 130, 131, 132  
 X  
 Xhosa, tribe, 62, 96, 97  
 Y  
 Yao, 62, 72

Yasin, Abdallah ibn, Muslim scholar, 42  
 Yohannes (John), emperor of Ethiopia, 94  
 Yorubaland, 75, 88  
 Yoruba of Oyo, 63, 75  
 Yunfa, king of Gobir, 82

## Z

Zagwe, kings, 50  
 Zaire, *see* Congo, 120  
 Zama, battle of, 202 BC, 36  
 Zambia, 138  
 Zanj (Arabic for "black"), 72, 108  
 Zanzibar, 26, 54, 73  
 Zenata, nomadic tribe, 42  
 Zheng He, Chinese admiral, 63, 67  
 Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), 120, 136  
 Zimbabwe African People's Republic, 136  
 Zulu, 62, 78, 96, 100, 101  
 Zululand, 86, 102  
 Zwangendaba, Zulu leader, 78, 98  
 Zwide, chief of Ndwamwe, 98